

DEDICATED HUNTER PROGRAM WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND ETHICS COURSE

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Welcome to the Dedicated Hunter Program! The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) is very excited with your commitment and dedication to wildlife conservation in Utah. In 2008, Dedicated Hunters and other volunteers contributed nearly \$2 million dollars in service to benefit Utah's wildlife and wildlife habitat. Your service will make a significant contribution to the efforts of the UDWR.

If you joined the program before 2009 and did not attend a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meeting before January 1, 2009, this course will fulfill the previously required RAC attendance. If you joined the program in 2009, you must complete this course and a minimum of 16 service hours before you will be eligible for your first permit.

NOTE: While RAC attendance is no longer a program requirement, your attendance and participation is strongly encouraged. All meeting dates and times can be found at http://wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings/. Your input in the public process is invaluable to the success of managing Utah's wildlife.

ABOUT THE COURSE

The purpose of this course is to provide hunters with a basic understanding of the core concepts related to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, general wildlife management principles, hunting ethics, and the wildlife management public input process in Utah.

INSTRUCTIONS

As you proceed through this course, you will be asked a series of questions about the information you read. We encourage you to take notes or print the pages as you go, to help you answer each question. There are 6 sections with a total of 55 questions. It will likely take a minimum of two hours to complete this course. If you answer a question incorrectly, you will have an opportunity at the end of the course to answer the question(s) again. A score of 100 percent is required to pass the course.

After successful completion of the course, you will be prompted for your personal information. **Please use the same customer ID number shown on your Certificate of Registration (COR) to ensure your account will reflect completion of this course.** You were sent a copy of your COR/customer ID when you joined the program. You will then be issued a certificate of completion. We strongly encourage you to print and keep this certificate for your records. You will not be eligible for your permit until you have completed this course and the required number of service hours.

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I. THE NORTH AMERICAN MODEL OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Successful wildlife conservation requires a variety of management approaches extending beyond biology and ecology. To achieve meaningful outcomes, state fish and wildlife agencies must consider many important aspects related to wildlife management. Agency leaders must realistically acknowledge the issues facing wildlife and their habitat while remaining flexible enough to adjust management plans to reflect the ever changing context of socio-political, biological, legal and financial challenges.

As early as the 1800s, North American hunters and anglers began to recognize the increasing challenges related to wildlife survival. Years of overhunting and habitat loss decreased wildlife populations from what was once thought to be countless numbers of species, to extinct and severely depleted species. This acknowledgement by hunters and anglers began a revolution in which the need to protect rapidly disappearing wildlife became a priority. The early organization of sportsmen's groups was the first step in educating lawmakers and the public to create the wildlife management practices used in North America today. Their efforts have become the foundation of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model. This model consists of two basic principles: 1) fish and wildlife belong to all citizens for non-commercial use and 2) are to be managed in such a way that their populations will be sustained at optimal levels forever. These principles are grounded by seven concise components first described in the mid to late 1800s.

Polished and adapted over time, the seven components (also known as the Seven Sisters) of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model continue to be the framework of wildlife management today.

The Seven Sisters are:

- 1. Wildlife is held in the public trust** – In 1842, a Supreme Court decision established that it is the government's responsibility to hold all fish and wildlife in trust for all citizens. Whether administrated by federal or state governments, all legislation since that time, regarding issues of wildlife ownership, has reflected the "public trust doctrine."
- 2. Prohibition on Commerce of Dead Wildlife** – Commercial traffic in dead animal parts were eliminated. Hunters and anglers led the effort to eliminate killing wildlife for profit.
- 3. Democratic Rule of Law** – Regardless of wealth, social standing, or land ownership, every citizen has an opportunity to participate in the harvest of wildlife governed by guidelines set by lawmakers. By law, this also gives citizens the right to express their thoughts and opinions about wildlife conservation and its use.
- 4. Hunting Opportunity for All** – Considering that hunters and anglers led the movement to increase awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation, it is not surprising that the model would address hunting. Hunting is deeply rooted in North American traditions and it makes sense to include the opportunity and privilege to do so.

5. **Non-Frivolous Use** – Along with laws that govern access to and protection of wildlife, there are also safeguards against the senseless killing of wildlife. These safeguards defined killing wildlife for no other reasons than for food, fur, self-defense, and the protection of property.
 6. **International Resources** – When it comes to protecting fish and wildlife, boundaries of states and nations are irrelevant. Laws and policies had to be implemented to reflect that reality. The Fur Seal Treaty of 1911 and The Migratory Bird Protection Act of 1915 are good examples of international cooperation. There are many more regional agreements between states that demonstrate their efforts toward protecting wildlife by regulating hunting and angling activities.
 7. **Scientific Management** – Interest in science was deeply embedded in North American society in the 1800s so it was identified very early as a crucial requirement in the creation of the model. For centuries, scientists have been recording wildlife species and habitat composition as it is crucial to conservation.
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II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Over the last 150 years, human activities have eliminated a number of wildlife species and greatly reduced others. However, during this same time period it is also human activities that have contributed to increasing populations and survival of many wildlife species – some of which were once rare. Compatible human influences on the environment and high-quality state and federal management programs are just a couple examples of some positive efforts being made in the best interest of wildlife. Because humans and wildlife must co-exist on our planet, public awareness and education about wildlife and their needs are vital to the much needed support of management efforts.

Media attention is just one element of education contributing to increased public awareness to protect all wildlife and its habitat. Increased public attention and outcry has in turn, prompted congress and state legislatures to approve stronger laws and programs to aid in the conservation of wildlife species. Today, with the exception of animals considered to be pests in our society, nearly all mammals and wild birds receive some degree of legal support and protection.

There are some species that require even higher levels of protection due to their fragile population numbers. Endangered and threatened wildlife populations may only be maintained or increased by protecting their populations and by protecting, expanding and improving suitable habitats. While denying human access to lands may help decrease some of the negative impacts incurred, it certainly does not guarantee that wildlife can be saved indefinitely. This is precisely why thoughtful planning with realistic consideration of wildlife's needs will help assure a long future for diverse wildlife resources.

Thoughtful planning begins with evaluating the habitat needs of all wildlife species. There are species such as the common pigeon or house sparrow that have simple habitat needs and can survive with little to no human efforts. However, other species such as mule deer require

consciously planned programs to help maintain complex habitats, in turn maintaining healthy populations. All animals require healthy habitats to maintain their populations from year to year. It is up to wildlife management agencies and the public to ensure this happens.

Food, water, shelter, and space are the main life elements needed for any animal to survive, and even though many animals live in the same general areas, every species habitat needs are unique. Large animals, such as elk and deer, travel through extended natural areas looking for their year-round survival needs. Smaller animals such as shrews and moles may live out their entire lives in one small corner of a field. When the habitat needs of every species is calculated, the diversity is nearly infinite, and without adequate habitat, protection of wildlife species is pointless.

It is not the sole responsibility of wildlife agencies to protect and provide suitable wildlife habitat. It is the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to this challenge in order to maintain wildlife for future generations.

III. WILDLIFE – Part 1 of 4

Habitat

Opportunities for creating and improving wildlife habitats to restore and increase wildlife populations are nearly endless. However, every piece of land has a limit to the number of animals in any one species it can sustain. This concept is known as the “carrying capacity.” The carrying capacity is the ability of an area to support a species with appropriate amounts of the food, water, shelter, and space it needs to survive during any given season. Once the carrying capacity of an area is reached, the excess animals must move to another area or die. If no other habitat is available or accessible, overcrowding creates a stressed environment in which some species can destroy their own habitats, decreasing the chance of survival even more. In areas where plant and other life are abundant, the carrying capacity is usually much higher in the summer and fall than it is in the winter. Weather is a huge contributing factor to the annual survival of wildlife populations, but habitat determines long-term survival.

It is the tendency of nearly all wildlife populations to multiply and reach the carrying capacity of the area in which they live. For species like rabbits and pheasants that produce multiple young each breeding season, the carrying capacity can be reached very quickly. Though many species do produce an overabundance of young, their populations fluctuate greatly due to adverse weather, disease, predators, starvation and other hazards. For species like bears, who rarely breed until they are several years of age, their population growth is much slower but nature compensates by bestowing them with a much longer life span. In general, the higher the reproductive rates of a species - the higher the death rate. Nature’s method is to produce a surplus of some species to increase the chance that some of them will survive. Natural survival characteristics such as size, strength, speed, and alertness also contributes to the ability of a species to thrive. Species that can defend their own and protect their territories are even more likely to survive.

Regrettably, expanding urbanization is decreasing suitable wildlife habitat thereby making it more difficult for many species to survive. Because urbanization has contributed to the decrease of wildlife habitat, it is important that people recognize their ability to contribute to sustaining healthy wildlife and wildlife habitat. The federal government holds in trust over 660 million acres of wildlife refuges, national forests, parks, public domain, and other lands for the American public. The health of this land not only depends on wildlife and land management agencies, it also depends on people and decisions that are made about how it is managed. Because the natural cycles and systems of wildlife have been interrupted by human activities, deliberate management is the only way that many species can be secured for future generations.

WILDLIFE – Part 2 of 4

Protection

Deliberate wildlife management not only requires careful planning and consideration of wildlife survival requirements, it also requires implementing a higher level of protection for many species. Healthy habitats are of little or no value to wildlife if there are no healthy species to breed and occupy or populate them. As discussed earlier, there are many laws on both the federal and state levels that protect wildlife from complete extermination due to human activities. Those who violate these laws face very serious penalties such as fines and sometimes jail.

While there are laws in existence to protect wildlife, there are also state and federal laws that allow wildlife to be hunted. These species are classified as “game” and may only be taken when specific state and federal regulations are followed. Regulations include specific calendar dates, hours, bag limits, and the methods in which they may be taken. These regulations are based on monitoring and continuous research meant to ensure plentiful populations for both biological and recreational purposes. For instance, game populations must be protected during very specific times of the year to allow for breeding and bearing their young to increase their species. Without this protection, entire species could be wiped out very quickly.

To help protect rarer forms of wildlife species, the U.S. Congress enacted Endangered Species Acts in 1966, 1969, and 1973. The Secretary of the Interior declares that endangered species are those in immediate danger of extinction and threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered in the near future. Species in these categories are put on a nationwide list that provides a higher level of protection. This list is periodically updated to reflect population fluctuation. Some states also have their own list of species that are at risk on a local or statewide basis. Survival of many species is dependant upon unique habitat needs that are greatly affected by intentional management practices, including habitat restoration and improvements.

It was not so long ago that species such as elk and deer were in danger of being wiped out due to practices like overhunting. Hunting rules and regulations and careful wildlife management practices have greatly contributed to increasing those populations throughout the country. According to the Wildlife Management Institute, recreational hunting has not eliminated or threatened any wildlife species. This is proof that controlled hunting practices are a positive element of wildlife management.

WILDLIFE – Part 3 of 4

Management Today

The overall purpose of wildlife management is to maintain population levels that first, fulfill the best interest of the resource and second, fulfill the recreational interests of the public. With the exception of some species such as eagles and marine mammals that have dual protection through federal and state laws, each state has an agency legally responsible to manage and protect most wildlife species within its borders. Proper wildlife management includes, but is not limited to: researching and gathering facts on each species, evaluating, maintaining, improving and developing habitat, creating regulatory guidelines, providing law enforcement and regulations, and executing tasks such as live trapping and species relocation. These management practices require highly qualified individuals for planning and implementation that could not be accomplished without adequate funding.

Nearly eighty-percent of the funding provided to wildlife agencies comes directly from hunting and fishing license sales and federal excise taxes from firearms, ammunition, and fishing tackle. Lack of funding makes managing wildlife nearly impossible. All too often, management becomes increasingly reactive instead of proactive. State agencies manage more than 50 million acres of land for wildlife purposes and work with landowners and land managers to restore and maintain habitat on public and private lands. Funding is a critical element of wildlife management.

The last hundred years has presented many challenges as well as many accomplishments in wildlife management. For example, by 1907 Rocky Mountain Elk had an estimated population of fewer than 100,000 existent only in and around Yellowstone National Park as well as some national forest areas in Colorado. By 1984, the populations of Rocky Mountain Elk had grown to well over half a million and were located in 20 states and 6 Canadian provinces. Today, the Rocky Mountain Elk is a favored game species of Utah hunters.

Another species that was greatly troubled was the Pronghorn. Authorities estimate that by 1910, only 13,000 existed mostly in Wyoming and Montana. By 1984, this species had grown to over 750,000 in all of the Western United States. Many of these population increases result from careful management planning that includes transplanting species to available healthy habitat to breed and populate new areas. Much of this success is due to the funding provided from sportsmen's license fees and special taxes implemented under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Acts. These acts have enabled wildlife management agencies to acquire, develop, or manage nearly 38 million acres of wildlife refuges, perform extensive research on wildlife habitat needs, population trends, diseases, and predator/prey relationships, increase education and law enforcement programs, and assist a countless number of landowners with wildlife habitat improvement projects. Public support, adequate funding, and knowledgeable wildlife professionals truly are at the heart of maintaining wildlife populations for future generations.

WILDLIFE – Part 4 of 4

Hunting as a Management Tool

Recreational hunting has been enjoyed by millions of people for more than a century. It is a well-known element of our culture but is often misunderstood. Like many other recreational activities, hunting involves a goal or expectation. The goal or expectation unique to hunting is the perceived potential of a kill. Without this goal it merely becomes hiking or a nature walk. The kill is not always a requirement, nor is it always accomplished, but the anticipation of the kill is a part of fulfilling an experience the average hunter seeks.

Many non-hunters do not support recreational hunting because they often assume that it is solely about killing. What both hunters and non-hunters should understand is that while hunting is certainly an opportunity to provide a challenging recreational option for approximately 18.5 million hunters in the U.S., it is first and foremost a necessary wildlife management tool. Wildlife agencies use hunting as a tool for reasons such as population control, eliminating a threat to people or other species, minimize environmental damages generally caused by overpopulation, and to provide a reliable source of funding to support the creation and improvement of habitat and education programs. It is also used as an outlet to build relationships between people and nature, friends and family, and opportunities for physical activity away from urban lifestyles.

Some of the biological factors used to make decisions about the number of hunting permits issued each year include: the reproductive rates and ability of a species to recuperate after a tough weather or hunting season and the availability of appropriate habitat that includes food, water, shelter, and space relative to the number of species it must support. When deciding what constitutes a legally hunted species, the following are just some of the characteristics examined: a species ability to replace annual population losses, the challenge to hunters, and the usefulness of flesh, fur, or hide. Hunting provides an opportunity for people to develop a conscious awareness and concern for nature and take an active role in protecting the environment.

IV. HUNTER ETHICS - Part 1 of 3

As discussed in previous sections, protecting and conserving wildlife and habitat is the duty of all citizens. Hunters have an increased personal interest and responsibility because of their commitment to the sport of recreational hunting. Hunters have contributed millions of service hours toward the creation, maintenance, and improvement of wildlife habitat. Without this contribution, hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts may not have access to the wildlife related recreational privileges available today. Protecting and conserving wildlife and wildlife habitat is not the only important factor in sustaining recreational hunting. The behaviors, attitudes and actions of hunters in and out of the field are just as important. The way hunters are perceived by the general public has a critical impact on the amount of support hunting receives. Hunters should always know and obey current hunting rules and regulations, participate in wildlife conservation, and maintain the highest ethical standards when participating in hunting activities.

Statistics show that only 10% of the U.S. population participates in recreational hunting, so the way **you** conduct yourself affects the future of recreational hunting for everyone. It only takes a few irresponsible hunters to damage the image of all hunters.

One of the first concepts learned in hunter education classes (must be taken by everyone born after 1965) is **hunter responsibility**. This includes knowing the difference between right and wrong and taking accountability for all actions that have an affect on wildlife, themselves, landowners, and other hunters. There are many circumstances in which a hunters' responsibility extends beyond written rules and regulations and this is why truly committed hunters adopt a **hunter's code of ethics**. This code is made up of six parts including: 1) obtaining written permission before entering private property, 2) obeying firearms handling safety, 3) following hunting rules and regulations, 4) acquiring good marksmanship and hunting abilities, 5) supporting conservation efforts and, 6) helping others learn proper skills and gain a positive attitude encouraging them to become true sportsmen. The hunters' code of ethics is based on respect for what is safe and fair in hunting and is just as important as hunting laws.

HUNTER ETHICS - Part 2 of 3

All responsible sportsmen should take the time to do whatever it takes to hunt ethically and legally. To do this, hunters should prepare for a hunt by; practicing firearm safety regularly, learning about the wildlife and habitat in which they will be hunting (including knowing the boundaries of each area), and remaining up to date on changes in hunting rules and regulations. There are numerous paper publications, books, and web sites available for hunters to learn about current wildlife related subjects. By investing in time to prepare for each hunt, hunters are more likely to respect themselves and be respected by others, improve hunting abilities, and become more conscious in their sport. From a beginner to a seasoned sportsman, everyone has something to learn and ways to improve.

Each state has its own rules and regulations related to hunting. Knowing these rules and regulations is equally as important as taking the time to sight in a firearm. This not only helps a hunter familiarize himself/herself with the firearm but it makes them a better marksman and less likely to make unnecessary mistakes. Hunters have a responsibility to themselves, other hunters, and wildlife to know their shooting abilities and the capabilities of the firearm they are using at all times. **There is absolutely no substitute for practice.** Hunters should ask themselves a number of questions when practicing with a firearm. Is the equipment shooting accurately? Is the target being hit consistently? Do they feel confident enough to hit the target they are aiming at? Do they truly appreciate the hunting privilege they are practicing for? Even though all of these concepts are learned in hunter education, every good hunter should think about them on a regular basis. Consistent study and practice decreases mistakes and leads to increased humane kills in the field.

HUNTER ETHICS - Part 3 of 3

All too often, hunting appears to be a contest between sportsmen. There are far more important concepts to focus on than who can succeed in shooting the biggest animal. A trophy animal should be displayed not as a reminder of the defeat over another hunter, but as a reminder of the hunt itself and the appreciation and respect for the animal. As appreciation and respect for the animal grows, ethical decisions tend to come naturally to each hunter. Hunters must never forget that recreational hunting in the United States is an earned privilege. The way hunters conduct themselves toward other people and wildlife can have both negative and positive impacts on the future of recreational hunting.

The concept of “Fair Chase” plays a huge role in hunting. Even though the “thrill of the chase” is considered a leading lure to hunting, the way sportsmen conduct themselves toward an animal while hunting matters more. Today’s technological advancements, such as electronics, radios, and some vehicles, have contributed to some unfair and unethical hunting practices. The foundation of “Fair Chase” consists of being ethical, sportsmanlike and lawfully pursuing and taking wildlife in a manner that does not give any hunter an unfair advantage over the animal. The use of machines to pursue wildlife is a violation of laws and fair-chase principles. The ability to pursue wildlife in a fair and ethical manner also means being prepared physically. This will allow you to enjoy the challenge of the chase and transport your animal from the area in which you harvested. It is very important for all hunters to know and accept their own physical and mental limitations.

V. UTAH’S PUBLIC PROCESS – Part 1 of 4

Overview

The mission of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) is “*To serve the people of Utah as trustee and guardian of the state’s wildlife.*” To serve the people appropriately, the UDWR must call on the public to gain their trust and input concerning wildlife management, rules, and regulations.

Historically, there were two boards that had the responsibility of producing policies for the UDWR. The regulations for big game species were set by The Board of Big Game Control while all other species were handled by the Wildlife Board. Having two separate boards proved to be very challenging as some of the decisions made by one board had conflicting affects on the other and attending crowds became overwhelming. In 1995, the Utah legislature eliminated the two board system to establish the current Wildlife Board. To tame the crowds and allow more issues to be heard, the Utah Legislature created Utah’s five Wildlife Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). This system helped to limit attendance by making meetings available regionally whereas they were previously held mostly in Salt Lake City.

UTAH'S PUBLIC PROCESS – Part 2 of 4

Regional Advisory Councils

Each council represents a different region of Utah and consists of 12 to 15 members who represent various interest groups or constituencies. The members include individuals who represent the following groups:

- Agriculture
- Sportsmen
- Non-consumptive wildlife
- Locally elected public officials
- Federal land agencies, and
- Public at large (including business)

Members of the RAC are nominated by respective interest groups or agencies. Once DNR nominations are compiled, the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the director of the Division of Wildlife Resources makes the final selections.

The purpose of the council is to hear input from the UDWR (including recommendations, biological data, and information regarding the effects to wildlife), the public and government agencies to make recommendations to the Wildlife Board in an advisory manner.

To get a list of all RAC meeting times and locations please visit the UDWR Website at: http://wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings/
federal land agencies, and public at large (including business).

UTAH'S PUBLIC PROCESS – Part 3 of 4

Utah Wildlife Board

Upon completion of scheduled Regional Advisory Councils meetings, the councils must report their voting results about wildlife issues to the Wildlife Board where final decisions are made about wildlife management, rules, and regulations.

There is only one Wildlife board consisting of seven members and the director of the Division of Wildlife Resources who acts as secretary to the board but is not a voting member. A minimum of four board members must be present to conduct business.

At least one member must have expertise or experience that represents each of the following areas:

- Wildlife management or biology
- Habitat management, including range or aquatic
- Business, including knowledge of private land issues; (and)

- Economics, including knowledge of recreational wildlife issues

Members of the Wildlife Board are nominated by a nominating committee consisting of eleven members who are appointed by the Governor from nominees by the following groups:

- Agriculture industry
- Sportsmen's groups
- Non-consumptive wildlife interests
- Federal land management agencies
- Utah Association of Counties
- Utah Chapters of the Society of Range Management and The Wildlife Society

The Governor makes the final decision regarding appointments to the Wildlife Board after the nominating committee submits the nominees that were collected from a statewide solicitation.

The purpose of the Wildlife Board is to establish the best policies pertaining to wildlife and the preservation, protection, conservation, perpetuation, introduction, and management of wildlife. Before the Wildlife Board can make these decisions, the Division of Wildlife Resources is to determine what is in the best interest of the wildlife resources in Utah.

When establishing policies, the Wildlife Board is to recognize that wildlife and wildlife habitat are a necessary part of a healthy, productive environment. They must also recognize the impacts of wildlife on humans.

UTAH'S PUBLIC PROCESS – Part 4 of 4

The UDWR strongly encourages public attendance at RAC and Wildlife Board meetings. This is an important opportunity for people to ask questions, bring up issues, and make comments and suggestions about wildlife management, rules and regulations in Utah. RAC and Wildlife Board meeting dates, times, locations and agendas are posted on the UDWR website at http://wildlife.utah.gov/public_meetings/.

The RAC and Wildlife Board meetings follow a similar meeting procedure. The agenda is available in advance and is essentially the same for each meeting. After each agenda item is introduced at each RAC, a presentation and/or recommendation from the DWR follows. Questions from the RAC and the public are taken and discussed and then the RAC votes. The process at a Wildlife Board meeting is essentially the same except they receive a report from each RAC about decisions made regionally. The Wildlife Board usually votes the same way the RACs do but there are cases in which the decisions may be different. If this is the case, the Wildlife Board chairman will send written documentation to each RAC explaining the difference of opinion.

Anyone who would like to speak at a RAC meeting must complete a comment card upon arrival and wait patiently for their name to be called. Because wildlife legally belongs to all citizens of this great nation, RAC and Wildlife Board meetings are the best way for the public to express their opinions, concerns, and ideas. This is also the best way for the public to ask questions that may help them better understand wildlife management.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat through conscious management, hunter education programs and volunteer conservation projects are critical in sustaining wildlife habitat and promoting wildlife education throughout the State of Utah. Through ongoing wildlife management, citizens can participate in ensuring that future generations will have the same opportunities we have today. Wildlife enthusiasts can participate in conservation by practicing and promoting legal and ethical stewardship and management of wildlife habitats. As a member of the Dedicated Hunter Program you have taken a very important step in showing and acting on your commitment to the health and future of sustaining wildlife populations in the United States.

Thank you for your participation and commitment to the Dedicated Hunter Program and wildlife conservation in Utah.